

SW Target set to close its doors

Low profits cited; business group protests decision

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Although a committed group of residents and business people are campaigning for its doors to stay open, the Fondren area Target store is scheduled to close Jan. 31 because of lack of profitability.

The store, located at 11110 Fondren Road, opened in March 1979, and employs 127 people. Target media relations manager Carolyn Brookter said the corporation gave this outlet location as long as it could to become a money maker, but the dollars just aren't there to enable it to continue serving area patrons.

"We don't close a lot of stores," Brookter said, "and we hate to have to close this one, but it has just not been a profitable store for us for several years now."

Target is offering all employees of the Fondren store the opportunity to work at other Target stores, including the other 13 currently in greater Houston. Employees choosing not to

continue working for Target will be offered a severance package, Brookter said.

Not only were Fondren Target shoppers and the store's employees disappointed with the news — so is Southwest Houston 2000 Inc., a non-profit coalition of residents, businesses and other entities who support this area's economic development efforts.

Southwest Houston 2000 chairwoman Rita Woodward said the community will indeed be at a loss without the Target store.

"We are upset," she said. "Target is very popular in our community. We really use that store. We're trying to revitalize our community, and it's sad to see good, solid businesses such as Target move out."

Woodward and the Southwest 2000 board of directors have launched letter-writing and phone-calling campaigns to Target's regional and national headquarters to try and convince Dayton Hudson Corp.'s largest division — and one of the nation's leading retailers — to reconsider

keeping the Fondren store open.

Fliers sent to members of Southwest Houston 2000 encourage residents to speak to the manager or assistant manager of the Fondren store, as well as write letters to the store's regional manager and CEO of Target to express discontent at the store's closing.

"We've been in contact with Councilmember Martha Wong's office and with Target CEO Bob Ulrich to discuss the real problems with this store," Woodward said, "and to see if the community-at-large can assist in some of the solutions, so that Target will remain viable in our community."

Target's decision to close its Fondren store came after long, careful consideration, Brookter said.

"The long-term viability of this location just doesn't justify keeping it open. We wish it were otherwise, but unfortunately, it's not."

The Target location is scheduled to continue normal hours of operation until its closing date of Jan. 31.